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These measures will prove next season the means of diverting the greatest portion of the emigration which formerly proceeded to the interior by way of New York, and of inducing emigrants to prefer the more natural, cheaper, and equally expeditious route of the St. Lawrence.

Observations upon the Poorest Class of Operatives in Glasgow in 1837.

By C. R. BAIRD, Esq., Secretary of the Glasgow Statistical Society.

[*Read at a Meeting of that Society, on the 16th February, 1838.*]

OWING to the depressed state of trade, the consequent want of employment, and the high price of provisions, in the latter part of the spring and the beginning of the summer of 1837, a large number of the working classes in Glasgow were reduced to very necessitous circumstances. A public meeting was accordingly held in the Town Hall, on the 19th May of that year, when it was resolved that a subscription should be raised for the purpose of affording relief to the industrious poor, and a committee was appointed to procure subscriptions (which soon amounted to upwards of 5200*l.*, besides a balance of above 3000*l.* handed over by the former Relief Committee), and to administer such relief as they thought proper. The writer of the following observations acted as Secretary to the Committee.

After duly considering how their operations should be conducted, the Committee resolved,—1st, to employ, or to get employment, at out-door labour, for as many as possible of the persons who applied for relief; for instance, in banking the river Clyde, cutting foundations for buildings, breaking stone-metal, and similar work, in which department the Committee, through the kind exertions of Provost Mills, the River Trustees, and other gentlemen, were very successful; 2ndly, to give out yarn to be woven into webs by such applicants as were weavers, who either were incapable for out-door work, or for whom no such employment could be procured; and, 3rdly, to establish soup-kitchens, to provide food for applicants for whom no suitable work could be procured, and for destitute children. It was also agreed that each applicant for relief should give a statement of his case by answering the following queries, viz.—

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Name. | 8. When dismissed, and for what. |
| 2. Age. | 9. If a Unionist. |
| 3. Place of nativity. | 10. Supply from other sources. |
| 4. Ditto of abode. | 11. If he (or she) had a wife (or husband). |
| 5. Length of residence in Glasgow. | 12. Number of children below 10 years. |
| 6. Occupation. | 13. Number of children above 10 years, |
| 7. By whom last employed. | and how occupied. |

This statement was required to be attested by the General or Resident Commissioner of Police of the ward within which the applicant resided; and the answers to queries 7 and 8 were also required to be certified by the applicant's last employer.

It will be at once observed that the queries 1, 2, 4, 6, and the last four, were necessarily put, in order to be able to judge of the propriety of granting relief; and it may be mentioned here that the queries 3 and 5 were made to satisfy several members of the committee, who wished

to know how many of the applicants were natives of Glasgow, and how long those who were not so had resided there, and the number of strangers relieved; that No. 7 and 8 were put to be able to learn farther particulars of the applicants, by applying to their last employers; and that the 9th query was inserted at the request of some of the members of the committee, in order to learn, as far as possible, the extent of Trades' Unions among the operatives, and to enquire how far such Unions tended to increase or diminish distress among these classes. The writer of these observations, as Secretary to the committee, wished to put additional queries, with the view to procure farther information respecting the general condition of the working classes; but it was thought better to put few questions, except those necessary to enable the committee to judge of the physical wants of the applicants.

When the cases of the applicants were attested, the committee got out-door labour for them, or employed them in preparing road-metal, or in weaving, or gave them tickets to receive food (soup and bread in proportion to the number of their families) at the soup-kitchens, of which there were eight in all, in different parts of the city and suburbs.

Above 6000 schedules of queries and answers, containing the statements of the cases of applicants, were lodged with the committee; besides which, many persons, adults and children, were supplied from the soup-kitchens, on certificates from respectable citizens, without having lodged statements of their cases, or answers to the queries. Indeed, at one time, there were on the soup-kitchen list alone upwards of 3800 adults, besides children, in all about 18,500 persons.

The writer has examined the statements (or schedules of queries and answers) of the cases of those male applicants, in all 3072, who were employed by, or got employment through, the committee, and 1000 of the cases of those adults who received food from the soup-kitchens. By such examination he has been able to prepare the subjoined tables, on which he proceeds to make the following remarks:—

TABLE I.—*A Statement of the Persons who were supplied with Work by the Glasgow Relief Committee in 1837.*

APPLICANTS.	Scotch.			Irish.	English.	Foreigners.	Total.
	Glasgow	Other Parts.	Total.				
Weavers, married . . .	753	440	1,193	948	23	7	2,171
,, single . . .	398	148	546	155	9	3	713
Total . . .	1,151	588	1,739	1,103	32	10	2,884
Other Trades, married .	50	45	95	..	7	..	102
,, single . .	52	34	86	86
Total . . .	102	79	181	..	7	..	188
Total married . . .	803	485	1,288	948	30	7	2,273
,, unmarried . . .	450	182	632	155	9	3	799
Total . . .	1,253	667	1,920	1,103	39	10	3,072

TABLE I.—*continued.*

APPLICANTS.	Scotch.			Irish.	English.	Foreigners.	Total.
	Glasgow	Other Parts.	Total.				
Ages of Applicants:							
Below 30	607	227	834	304	17	3	1,158
30 to 50	497	265	762	532	15	6	1,315
Above 50	149	175	324	267	7	1	599
Total	1,253	667	1,920	1,103	39	10	3,072
Children of Applicants:							
Under 10 years of age	1,535	694	2,229	1,690	56	19	3,994
Above 10 „	702	542	1,244	1,020	39	3	2,306
Total	2,237	1,236	3,473	2,710	95	22	6,300
Unionists, and their ages:							
Below 30	259	123	382	176	8	..	566
30 to 50	284	149	433	302	10	1	746
Above 50	70	53	123	117	1	..	241
Total	613	325	938	595	19	1	1,553

TABLE II.—*A List of the Persons who were supplied with Food at the Soup-Kitchens.*

Males.			Females.			Total.
Weavers	247	} 328	Weavers	45	} 672	1000
Other trades . .	81		Other trades . .	627		
Scotch—Glasgow .	400	} 312	Ages—under 30 .	175	} 131	131
„ other parts .	312		30 to 50 . . .	499		
Irish	266	} 18	Above 50 . . .	326	} 475	475
English	18		Widowed . . .			
Foreigners	4	} 4			} 394	394
Total	1000					

Number of children under 10, 1428; above 10, 706; independent of parents, 54; total, 2188.

Of the 3072 applicants who received work nearly two-thirds (as might indeed have been expected) were Scotchmen, the number of Scotch applicants being 1920, viz.—

Married men, weavers	1193	} 1288	} 1920
„ of other trades	95		
Single men, weavers	546	} 632	
„ of other trades	86		

The number of Irish applicants was 1103, viz.—

Married men, weavers	948	} 1103
Single men, „	155	

being rather more than one-third of the total number supplied with work, which may appear a large number to persons who are unacquainted with the working classes in Glasgow; but the statement of this fact will, the writer thinks, go far to disabuse the minds of many of the community of an idea too prevalent, that at least a majority (it has been repeatedly stated, two-thirds) of the persons relieved by charity in Glasgow are Irish.

The number of English applicants, it will be seen, was very small, only 39, viz.—

Married men, weavers	23	} 39
Single do. „	9	
Married do. of other trades	7	

And those of other countries only amounted to 10, viz.—

Married men, weavers	7	} 10
Single do. „	3	

It will be observed that the number of weavers of the said 3072 was to those of other trades as 15 to 1, there being of—

Weavers { married	2171	Other trades { married	102
single	713	single	86
	<hr/> 2884		<hr/> 188

Which great surplus of weavers is partly to be accounted for by the fact that the fund was known to be raised especially for the hand-loom weavers; but at the same time the statement shews (as was known to be the case in former years, particularly in 1826) that during any depression in trade, or scarcity of provisions, the weavers are those who suffer first, and, it may be added, most severely; therefore they may well be accounted the poorest class of operatives in Glasgow.

It is rather a remarkable circumstance that all the Irish applicants were weavers, and were generally employed in heavy work; the Scotch being preferred for the lighter fabrics.

The writer has not been able to learn, with any degree of precision, the total number of hand-loom weavers in Glasgow and its suburbs, but has been informed by several persons, most likely to be acquainted with the truth, that there are about 8000. Of these it will be seen, by Table No. I., that the Relief Committee assisted (by giving work to) 2884; and by Table No. II. it appears that of 1000 persons who were supplied with food at the soup-kitchens, there were—

Female weavers	45	} 392
Male do.	247	

And taking the same proportion of the 2000 cases not examined, 784, it may be stated that at least 4060 of the adults assisted by the committee were weavers.

The writer has not thought it important to distinguish the particular trades of the 188 applicants supplied with work who were not weavers; but may merely mention that they were nearly all cloth-lappers, calenderers, and others closely connected with the manufacture of cotton cloth.

Of the 3072, the number of married men was 2273, viz.—

Married Men, Weavers, of the following Ages.	Married Men of other Trades.	Total of each Age.
Under 30	42	532
30 to 50	43	1199
Above 50	17	542

Total married 2273

The fact that so many as 532 of that number were married under 30 years of age (at what age—how much below 30—the writer has no opportunity of learning) goes far to shew the great improvidence of early marriages among the very poorest of the working-classes; and it will

also be noticed (from the number of children afterwards specified) that a large number of the applicants above 30 years of age must have been married at early periods of life. Indeed the writer can state, on the testimony of a manufacturer long in extensive business, that in no class is marriage, in general, so early as among the weavers.

The number of children was 6302, viz.—

	Children under 10 Years of Age.	Children above 10 Years of Age.	Total.
Of fathers under 30 . .	780	27	807
,, 30 to 50 . .	2686	1187	3873
,, above 50 . .	528	1094	1622
Total . .	3994	2308	6302

The average of this table gives nearly 3 children to each family; and taking the number of Scotch married applicants, 1288, and the number of their children, 3473, there are only 2·69 to each family; while the number of Irish applicants married, 948, and the number of their children, 2712, shew 2·86 to each family, establishing the current opinion, that the lower classes of the Irish are fully more prolific than the Scotch.

The writer did not expect to find so many Unionists among the weavers as is shewn in Table No. I., there being 1553 Unionists among the 3072 applicants. It is but fair, however, to state that the Union, or combination among the weavers, appears to have been of the most harmless description, merely, if possible, to get a general fixed rate of wages, and (so far as the writer has been able to learn) never productive of any of those acts of violence, or other great evils, which have characterised some Unions of other trades. On the other hand, it is proper to mention that the re-enactment of the combination laws is one of the measures proposed to benefit the hand-loom weavers, not merely with the view to keep down Unions among the weavers themselves, but more (as the writer supposes) to remove the obstacles, arising from combinations of other trades, to the weavers entering such trades.

After what has been mentioned in the previous parts of this paper, it is almost unnecessary to state that the great bulk of the weavers in Glasgow and its suburbs are in extreme poverty. Their wages, which even in 1819 were as low as 12*s.* gross, or 10*s.* 8*d.* nett (the deductions being for loom-rent, winding, &c.), now average only 8*s.* 4*d.* gross, or 7*s.* nett, per week; and even for this miserable pittance they are obliged to work from 14 to 16 hours per day. Their houses, which are generally in the suburbs, are of the poorest description, barely furnished, and the food and clothing of the inmates, as might be expected, not only of the plainest description, but also quite inadequate. In short, as is evident from the appearance of most of them, poverty and distress of nearly every kind “is their portion.”

From personal experience, as well as from the information of others intimately acquainted with the subject, the writer is able to state that the religious, moral, and intellectual condition of the weavers was long of a very high grade; and even yet the writer is of opinion that the elder portion of them rank higher in these respects than any other class of tradesmen. But as poverty prevents many of them from attending public worship, and still more from educating their children, there can be little doubt that their character is fast deteriorating, and that their children will be in a still more deplorable condition.

Before concluding, the writer may briefly state, without expressing any opinion upon, some of the causes which have been assigned for the distress now existing among the weavers. These are,—1st, competition, or the attempts among manufacturers to undersell each other, by which they have reduced the wages to the average above stated. 2nd. The state of the currency and banking system, which affords at one time undue facilities to over-trading, and again causes fatal revulsions in trade, and reduces wages below their natural level. 3rd. The Corn Laws, as keeping up the price of bread, by the exclusion of foreign corn, thus giving a monopoly to the land-owners, forcing the foreign capitalist to resort to manufactures instead of agriculture, seeing that our Corn Laws prevent an exchange of produce; enabling the foreign manufacturer, from the cheapness of food abroad, and its dearness in this country, to undersell the British manufacturer, and leading to a transfer of the cotton manufacture to America and the continent of Europe. 4th. Embezzlement of materials, particularly of weft. The manufacturers allege that weft is stolen by the weavers and winders, to an extent approaching to from 6 to 7 per cent., and is purchased at a cheap rate by “Bowl Corks,” who work it up into plain goods, which they can afford to sell at rates from 10 to 20 per cent. below the regular manufacturers, since they give lower wages to the weavers than those given by the regular houses. 5th. The superabundance of weavers (and this the writer deems the principal cause), ascribed to the influx of Irish and others into the trade, from the facility with which it is acquired; to the necessity the weavers are under to increase their incomes by putting their children early to the loom; to the effects of combinations, in keeping the weavers from entering into other trades; to the application of machinery to many fabrics formerly wrought at the hand-loom; and to the preference given by the weavers to their own trade, from their being more their own masters than they would be at other employments, and from being able to indulge their domestic habits by having their families more under their own eye than when employed at other trades.

The writer is incompetent to judge of the remedies which have been proposed to better the condition of the weavers: he may mention, however, that the following have been suggested, viz.—1st. The establishment of a Board of Trade, to fix a minimum rate of wages, and secure an equality over the whole kingdom. 2d. A repeal of the Act making Bank of England paper a legal tender. 3d. A repeal of, or at all events a change in, the Corn Laws. 4th. More severe enactments for the suppression of the “Bowl-weft” system. 5th. Emigration, so as to lessen the number of hands. 6th. The re-enactment of the combination laws (*vide supra*). 7th. An extension of the suffrage. 8th. The establishment of a fund to enable weavers to leave their own and learn some other trade, and to put their children to other trades. And, 9th. A greater number of clergymen and schools, so as to educate the people, make them more religious and moral, and consequently more industrious, prudent, and economical. And were the writer to venture an opinion on the subject, he would submit that the last remedy would be the most effective: it may be possible, by some of the other remedies proposed, to better the physical condition of the people for a time, but it is only by improving the moral man that any permanent amelioration can be effected.